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A "do-it-yourself" library move may produce significant changes in the established patterns of personnel organization and behavior of the library staff. However, most previously published work on the topic of moving a library collection concentrates on procedural aspects of a move. This study recounts and analyzes the impact of such a move on library staff attitudes and morale. The authors used their direct experience and a post-move survey to determine staff attitudes before and after the move. They determined that such a move can achieve a sense of team building if careful attention is paid to personnel issues, but they could not determine whether this effect was long lasting. (11 references) (Author)

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THE "DO-IT-YOURSELF" LIBRARY MOVE: CONSEQUENCES FOR STAFF INTERACTIONS AND MORALE

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ABSTRACT

A "do-it-yourself" library move may produce significant changes in the established patterns of personnel organization and behavior of the library staff. However, most previously published work on the topic of moving a library collection concentrates on procedural aspects of a move. This study recounts and analyzes the impact of such a move on library-staff attitudes and morale. The authors used their direct experience and a post-move survey to determine staff attitudes before and after the move. The authors determined that such a move can achieve a sense of team building if careful attention is paid to personnel issues, but they could not determine whether this effect was long lasting.

A "do-it-yourself" library move, one in which all the supervision and labor is supplied by existing library staff members, is not an uncommon occurrence in the academic world. The logistics of such a move are awesome, and several writers have addressed the technical and physical issues involved in the relocation of collections. Of equal interest, however, are the dramatic changes that may occur, at least temporarily, in the established patterns of personnel organization and behavior.

In 1987 the authors of this article were participants in the planning and execution of a major library move at Georgia State University. The William Russell Pullen Library collections were redistributed into a new building addition and existing floors were reorganized. One hundred thirty-four people, including the full-time library staff and some student assistants were all involved in moving, shifting, and shelfreading more than one million volumes. Bringing to this experience diverse backgrounds in library science, psychology, sociology and educational administration, the authors became fascinated with the social and behavioral aspects of this unusual library event. This article is an effort to recount and analyze these aspects of the move, in hopes that the insights might be of use to others considering or planning a similar venture.

Much of the following discussion is based on our memories as active participant-observers of the events described. The idea

of writing an article did not arise until some months after the project was completed. At that time the authors conducted a survey of the staff who had participated, in an attempt to measure some of their attitudes toward the move and see if any of their reactions correlated with age, gender, length of service, or type of position. Although questions were asked about participants' feelings both before and after the move, the fact that the survey occurred some time after the experience may have diminished the value of this approach. In general, the survey results confirmed the authors' impressions of the experience and did not reveal any startling new information. While some findings of the survey are included herein, the greater portion of the conclusions are based on the authors' direct experience of the move and the period preceding and following it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Moving a library collection may be the most challenging, even daunting, task that a library administrator can confront. While library literature discloses few citations specifically related to a library move, the available references underscore the magnitude of such a venture. Kurth and Grim devoted an entire book to the planning and execution of the 1962 move of the National Library of Medicine, holding over a million volumes, to Bethesda, Maryland. This work is useful for its considerable practical information, including appendices providing techniques for measuring collections.[1] Moran discussed the transfer of

1,800,000 volumes from eleven buildings to a new graduate research library at the University of Chicago, and the integration of 1,500,000 of the books to form the main collection of this library. Moran stressed such factors as the importance of testing every part of the moving plan, building in checks to allow for adjustments in measurements, and the importance of flexibility in plans, schedules, and attitudes.[2]

Kurkel described the details of the movement of a smaller academic library, the 682,810 volume collection of Smith College. The author stressed the importance of "constant and accurate supervision in a high-pressure environment" and emphasized that the success of the move was due to the use of carefully derived statistics on manpower, time and cost requirements.[3] Most larger libraries accomplish moves by utilizing moving companies, specially hired student assistants, or Plant Department personnel. By contrast, the movement of the Geissinger Medical Center Library of 30,000 volumes involved the entire full-time staff. Roth emphasized the importance of staff morale in a task of this magnitude. Each staff member had specific areas of responsibility and assignments in this move. The staff also conducted an open house after the move to introduce the facility to patrons and to celebrate their accomplishments.[4] Most recently, Bayne described the many-faceted issues involved in the move and consolidation of several discrete collections as well as equipment and furnishings into the new central library at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.[5] The university library move

to be discussed in this article is similar to the Geissinger Medical Center Library move in that the entire staff was involved in the process. The emphasis in our discussion will be on the impact on staff of this involvement rather than the procedural aspects of library moves covered in the other references summarized above.

The importance of staff motivation to the accomplishment of organizational goals has been discussed extensively in the literature of organizational development. Most administrators in libraries have become familiar with motivational theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in which fulfillment of the need for self-actualization presupposes fulfillment of lower-order needs such as survival and security. Present-day managers bring such techniques as job enrichment, quality circles, matrix organization, sociotechnical system design, and team-building to bear on motivation of employees in different organizational positions and with different personality styles and values.[6] Most of the techniques focus on work group relationships rather than interdepartmental relationships in the library. Bare administered the Work Group Survey to professional and nonprofessional library work groups. The researcher found that professional group performance was correlated most highly with expertise, mature interpersonal processes, and task goal clarity. Nonprofessional group performance, on the other hand, correlated most with performance-contingent rewards, member retention, supervisory behavior, and workflow efficiency.[7]

Although focusing on the performance of individual work groups is no doubt necessary, this focus does not confront the issue that separate groups may become isolated and territorial to the detriment of overall organizational goals. Gardner, in his suggestions for combatting organizational "dry rot," emphasized the deleterious impact of "vested interests," especially in academic organizations.[8] Library organization often reflects an individualistic or competitive reward structure rather than a cooperative structure in which an individual or group can achieve goals only if other individuals or groups attain theirs. A classic study in which cooperative reward structures were fostered was Sherif's research with preadolescent boys at a summer camp. The "vicious" competition between groups of boys was offset by a superordinate goal that could be achieved only by cooperation among the groups. The boys joined forces to repair a breakdown in a water supply line, a venture that appeared to lead to increasing friendships and mutual acknowledgement of strengths among the formerly warring factions.[9]

We were curious to see if a similar superordinate goal, the moving of a university library collection, would lead to improvements in relationships and morale among staff members involved. Conroy and Jones stress the importance of team-building to develop esprit de corps.[10] Team-building may have a positive and dramatic impact on productivity; evidence suggests that a highly motivated, cohesive team may consistently outperform individuals. In this instance, the "team" was the

entire library staff. In our research, we attempted to discover whether the feeling of camaraderie informally observed by us during the move was shared by other participants and whether the impact was long-lasting.

BACKGROUND ON PULLEN LIBRARY

To appreciate the significance of the move experience, it may be helpful to know something of the organization of the library and of precedents for library-wide team-work. The William Russell Pullen Library has had a history of participative decision-making and cooperation during the past two decades. In 1976, the library faculty drafted and approved bylaws through which standing committees were established providing faculty representation in many areas of library governance. The support staff also elect representatives to several of the standing committees and have a separate Supportive Staff Committee comprised of elected representatives from all departments.

While these committees provide participation by faculty and staff in a broad range of issues, the number of staff involved at any one time is limited to a small percentage. The library is organized into six departments and, for many staff, daily contacts occur primarily within their own departments or smaller work units. It is in the area of special projects that the library has seen the benefits of broader involvement of the staff at all levels.

In 1976 a collection security system was purchased and installed. A major component in the implementation of the security system was the targeting of the collections. This labor-intensive job involved staff in all departments of the library. Staff were assigned certain sections of the collections to target and they worked independently to complete the tasks. Both full-time and student employees worked on the project.

In 1982, the library implemented a computer output microfiche (COM) Catalog of all records in machine readable form. The decision was made to condense and freeze the card catalog by pulling all cards for those items in the COM Catalog. All members of the library staff were urged to volunteer for the card pulling project. Staff signed up for specified time slots and staff in the Catalog Department coordinated the training of staff, assignment of tasks, and supervision of the work.

In 1985, the library introduced its online public access catalog, OLLI. The planning, training of staff, preparation of instructional materials, and publicity for OLLI were coordinated by the Communications and Public Relations Committee. Two sub-committees were formed and volunteers from throughout the library were invited to serve on the Instruction and Publicity subcommittees. When the catalog was introduced to the public in the Fall of 1985, an OLLI Assistance Desk was established. Staff from all departments of the library were asked to volunteer for work at the desk to help orient patrons to the new system. The

OLLI assistance desk was in existence for two quarters and many members of the faculty and support staff volunteered to serve.

Thus, when planning for the library move began, a large portion of the library staff had experienced at least one precedent for library-wide volunteer participation in a super-ordinate goal. For long term staff, this may have been their third or fourth such experience. However, the prior projects, although they were major undertakings, did not have quite the same degree of urgency, total participation, or disruption of normal routines as did the library move.

PLANNING FOR THE LIBRARY MOVE

In July of 1987 a new nine-story library addition (Library South) was completed. Many months of planning for the expansion of the collections into the enlarged library complex culminated in the physical move of approximately one million volumes. The library administration had investigated the possibility of hiring professional movers to do the job. The cost was prohibitive and it was clear that much of the supervisory work would still have to be done by library staff. Thus, the decision was made to close the library for several weeks during a quarter break and to use all library staff for the move.

Serious planning began with the expectation that the library would take possession of the building in early summer and move the collections during the August quarter break. Anticipating this, department heads were asked to decline most requests for

vacation days during the last two weeks of August. These stringent limitations on annual leave during a very popular vacation time was for many staff the first indication of just how important and potentially troublesome this project was going to be.

News about the progress of Library South and plans for the move were disseminated regularly through normal channels of communications. In late June the University Librarian initiated a newsletter entitled Moving Right Along to further expedite the communication process. He wrote the newsletter himself, and sent it to all library staff and to selected university administrators. The first two issues, dated June 23 and July 15, gave fairly general information and began to sketch out some of the projected work patterns. By July, for instance, we knew the actual moving would be done by teams of ten: two "senders," two "receivers," and six booktruck "pushers." This physical work would be done in four shifts per day; other time slots would be scheduled for shelf-reading.

With the customary construction delays, the building was finished later than expected. More crucial was a problem with installation of the stacks. To widespread disappointment, it was announced in late July that the move would have to be postponed until the quarter break in December. While some were relieved to hear that August vacations now could be approved, others were at least equally distressed to learn that no vacation would be granted during the two weeks prior to the Christmas break. The

new schedule brought the advantage of cooler weather, but a shorter time frame in which to accomplish the move.

Planning continued. While the Head of Circulation was managing the colossal task of calculating the physical move, hours needed, etc., the departments made plans for handling their normal operations during the project. (More information about planning the physical move of the collection is available in an article by Cravey and Cravey.[11]) The prospect of closing the library to the public for two weeks, even during a quarter break, was totally unprecedented. Public services would, of course, be drastically curtailed. While some special arrangements were made to ease the effects on patrons, certain prohibitions were non-negotiable. For instance, no circulation services such as renewals or clearing of bills could be handled because the entire circulation staff would be involved full time in the move; interlibrary loans could not be provided since the collection would be in flux. Some staff members found these limitations uncomfortable; others enjoyed (somewhat guiltily) the knowledge that for this one unique period, the internal needs of the library and its staff would take priority over the convenience of the patrons.

On November 4, Moving Right Along No. 3 presented more details on the plan of the move. Moving would occur in four two-hour shifts, the first starting at 7:30 a.m., the last ending at 5:30 p.m. Shelfreading would be scheduled in 90 minute time slots, to maintain mental efficiency of the workers. A third

task was announced: operating a label-making machine to produce range finders. Staff were asked to indicate any limitations on their participation such as dust allergies or back problems. Everyone was advised to wear sturdy, casual clothes and be prepared for dirty, strenuous work. The expectation was made clear that all staff would provide some support to the move, but within their own capabilities. The attempt was made to allay the anxieties of those who had both allergies and physical limitations; useful tasks would be found for everyone.

By now it was clear that several different projects would be going on simultaneously. (That is, one or two moving crews, shelfreading, label making, and miscellaneous tasks.) Though no guarantees were made, it was projected that each volunteer would only need to contribute an average of three hours per day to the move. In public service areas, many of the staff began to eagerly anticipate how much work could be accomplished in those other five hours, since no patron services would be provided. Departmental projects were identified to make sure there was enough work to keep support staff occupied. Technical service areas, on the other hand, had to plan on handling less of their regular work than usual. Plans were made to handle certain tasks that would not stop just because the library was closed. (Processing of incoming mail, and periodical check-in were two examples.) It was also announced that some weekend work would be needed, and that one or more special events (i.e., parties) would be scheduled during the move to help boost staff morale.

By November 19 the full-blown plan for the move was unveiled, revealing the astounding amount of work that had gone into its preparation. Each department head received a thick three-ring binder showing an overview of the move, a day-by-day schedule of the work shifts, and the hours assigned each day to specific departments. Department heads were to be responsible for filling the hours assigned to their department; the methods used for filling these assignments varied greatly. One department held a lottery to see in what order staff members could pick their time slots. Another department simply posted the sheets on a bulletin board and allowed people to sign up on a first-come first-served basis. Departments with a large proportion of non-exempt staff had the additional complication of accommodating the weekend work while avoiding overtime.

Although each person was only asked to sign up for twenty-six hours during the whole two week move, filling all the assigned work shifts proved to be quite difficult. Reasons for this included overlapping work shifts on different tasks, guidelines such as "don't sign up for two consecutive moving shifts or two consecutive shelf-reading shifts," and the uneven distribution of tasks over time. Staff who could not fill their quota of twenty-six hours on their own department's sheets tried to find time on other department's lists. When all the sheets were collated, some slots were still empty. On a voluntary basis, individuals signed up for additional work shifts, so that a number of people were committed for up to thirty hours.

Department heads were to be responsible for providing substitutes for any absentee during the move. Most library employees were cooperative about the sign-up process. There were some complaints about the weekend work, and some staff were resistant to changing their customary work schedules. Shifts for shelf-reading at 7:30 a.m., for instance, were especially difficult to fill. By the time the scheduling was completed staff had already gained some experience with cross-departmental problem solving, and each department was made cognizant of its responsibility to the successful completion of the move. Individuals had made commitments to specific times and jobs. Many expressed the hope that, compared to the preliminaries, the move itself would be easy. Most of them would be disappointed.

THE EXECUTION OF THE MOVE

On December 5 the move got underway. The doors were closed to the public and the entire staff came to work in jeans and sweatshirts or other appropriate work clothes. A bulletin board in the central lobby announced where each shift should meet and who would be supervising. As the work groups reported, a brief meeting outlined the plan for that particular shift, instructions were given, and everyone put on a name tag--usually first names only. The shift supervisor took attendance and filled in any empty spaces with volunteers. During the first day or so, some time at each shift was spent on training. Procedures taught included basic techniques of loading, moving, and unloading

booktrucks, and the system for keeping trucks moving in their correct order. After a few days, most people had the routines mastered, and a few began to think they were experts.

It soon became clear that our diverse group of volunteer movers was not going to be able to shift the collection as quickly as had been planned. (Projections had been based on a smaller move which involved a collection much more uniform in size and shape, and which used only circulation staff accustomed to handling books and booktrucks.) On about the fourth day of the move the process began to get out of hand, as enthusiasm and inexperience combined with friendly competition and anxiety about the slow rate of progress. Some individuals began taking short cuts and ignoring the instructions of the supervisors. One floor was badly mis-arranged and had to be shifted all over again.

A mass meeting of the library staff was called to calm everyone down and reiterate the ground rules. It was announced at that time that the move was falling badly behind schedule. People were urged to volunteer for additional shifts, and the guidelines limiting consecutive shifts were suspended. People were warned, however, to recognize their own limits and not overdo to the point of physical injury. This course of events greatly enhanced the sense of the group having to pull together in an emergency situation. With varying amounts of difficulty, individuals began to let go of their hopes and plans for personal and departmental projects. About a dozen more individuals began

to work on the move almost full-time, and many others contributed two or more shifts (four to six hours) per day.

The meetings at the beginning of each shift grew more informal. Since many of the participants were unscheduled volunteers, additional moving teams were assembled on the spot. The constant forming and re-forming of work teams itself became a lesson in small group process. As people became familiar with the individual work styles of specific supervisors and participants, they could start to predict what groups would work well together. Some individual "senders" and "receivers" were strong and fast and tended to dominate the work flow. Other teams used a sightly slower but more even division of labor. If the teams at opposite ends of a shift were not of the same mind about this approach, it could cause difficulties. Volunteers, therefore, began to assign themselves to groups according to these new criteria, hoping to become part of a team that would work together compatibly.

Throughout the move, library staff from all departments had opportunities to work together. Movers learned the names of dozens of people in other units and got to know some quite well. Once the patterns of the physical work were established, most movers were able to carry on intermittent social conversations while working. The common tasks at hand provided easy, non-threatening conversational material. Those who for physical reasons could only shelf-read, on the other hand, had more solitary work, and may have missed some of the camaraderie that

others enjoyed. Some individuals may, in fact, have volunteered for more shelf-reading time because of shyness or a preference for solitude over teamwork.

A fascinating by-product of the move project was the partial suspension of conventional status roles. Administrators, department heads, librarians, support staff and a few students all mingled together as equals on the move. Support staff saw the managers in their sneakers and tee-shirts and began to know them as individuals. One survey respondent commented, "By far my favorite memory is the Library Administration Office is blue jeans . . .. Managers of all description would do well to wear blue jeans on occasion." At the same time, several support staff members from circulation were seen in major leadership roles. An LAII, for instance, could be observed giving the library director instructions on where to take his book truck, a phenomenon that was taken in good spirits by the administrator and enjoyed by most witnesses. A senior faculty librarian reported that, "My supervisor was a student assistant which was a wonderful (even joyous) experience of equality." One department head expressed relief at being able to relinquish for a short time the pressures of management and just be one of the laborers. Normal work routines were partially or completely disrupted for virtually everyone. No meetings, for instance, were held during the two week period except for those directly related to the move itself.

Another interesting phenomenon was the new-found importance of physical prowess among a population whose normal work tends to

be sedentary and mental. Some workers became renowned for their strength or agility handling large numbers of books, or their endurance in the face of non-stop physical exertion. This was another way for staff members who might have occupied a low level spot on the organizational chart to achieve a sense of accomplishment and leadership. Conversely, it was a source of frustration to some others, who were unable to excel due to limitations of physical conditioning. While the shift coordinator always tried to emphasize cooperative and non-pressured performance, a competitive edge did surface at times. One respondent commented, "In one way I really got into the competition and in a way that was painful since I couldn't possibly keep up with people who were stronger." Certain jobs, such as shifting oversized materials, necessitated a call for those with long arms and superior physical strength. Most of those who volunteered for the physical jobs experienced some aches and pains in the first few days. Many reported enjoyment of doing physical work as a change of pace, however, and only a few people actually incurred injuries. One of the most frequently reported feelings after the move was physical exhaustion.

As events progressed, there was still considerable concern about whether the move would be completed on time. The entire university closes down for a holiday break, so work would have to cease at the end of the day on Friday, December 18. Volunteers took on additional weekend work and progress was made, but the

plan was still slightly behind schedule. After consulting with the university administration, it was decided that the scheduled reopening of the library (December 28) would be delayed by one day. The 28th (the first day after the holiday break) would be used for one last day of library-wide volunteer participation. As a result, there was never a sense of complete resolution to the move. Many had expected to feel relief, exaltation, and closure December 18. Instead, they went off to their holiday breaks knowing the job was not quite done.

By the 29th, the library was more or less ready to open. The collections were on the right floors, through there were still a few spots where back-shifting was needed, range-finders had to be finished, etc. Virtually the entire collection had been shifted, shelf-read, and straightened. It might never again be seen in such close to perfect order. During the move many of the staff began to feel more closely connected to the collections. Staff members who had not worked in the public areas or had not worked with the collections felt a new intimacy with the materials, and a new empathy for those who handle shelving and shelf-reading on a daily basis. During these two weeks of work with the public absent, staff also seemed to develop a greater sense of ownership in the library building and perhaps by extension the library organization.

Another symptom of the team-building effect of the move was the addition of some new library folklore to the corporate memory. Members of the staff still use some of the neologisms

that were invented during the move. For example, when one is shelving books on a top shelf and other volumes fall off the back of that shelf...they've just committed "libracide." A staff member who was working on the final shelf-reading and straightening after the shifts (not familiar with the conventional term "edging") coined the word "soldierizing," as in "make the books line up nice and straight like little soldiers." There are memories of the worst disasters and the most productive days, and of "records" such as the most book trucks moved in a single shift.

Many members of the staff experienced strong feelings about the end of the project. Those who had supervised the move had worked themselves to exhaustion, often working twelve hour days and shouldering much of the emotional stress. Many people had found the project personally rewarding and were sorry to see it end. Others were tired of the work and disruption and glad to see it finished. The whole group, however, had been through an intense and prolonged common experience, and shared the sense of working together through a crisis to achieve a successful conclusion.

It is difficult to assess whether the morale-enhancing aspects of the move were long-lasting or ephemeral. The sense of knowing the names and faces of all the library staff diminished over time, as staff turnover took its natural course. Yet those who have been on staff since December 1987 are still connected by this piece of common history. The responses to our survey,

conducted about eight months after the move, showed markedly positive reactions to the move experience. We do not know, of course, if those who felt negatively were more likely to have left the library staff or to have declined to return the survey.

The authors believe that much of the team-building success of the move resulted from the careful attention to personnel issues that was incorporated into the planning process. It would be easy to become obsessed with just the physical and logistical aspects of the move, and a project of this magnitude could become a personnel nightmare. Planners of the Pullen move, however: kept the library staff thoroughly informed of developments along the way: designed work assignments that would fit the abilities of all types of employees: built into the schedule sufficient breaks, rewards and brief social events; and encouraged an informal, supportive, and cooperative atmosphere throughout the project. It is our hope that this narrative will be of use to other managers anticipating or planning a large scale "do-it-yourself" library move.

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